

# **MAYOR'S COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

## **DECEMBER 17, 2007**

### **MINUTES – Meeting in Newton City Hall – Cafeteria**

**PRESENT:** Doug Sweet (Acting Chair), Jane Brown, Rob Caruso, Lucie Chansky, Herb Cole, Jini Fairley, Linda Hiller, Jeff Hutter, Rosemary Larking, Barbara Lischinsky, Girard Plante, Heather Platt, Jason Rosenberg, Janna Zwerner

**REGRETS:**

**STAFF:** Beverly Droz, Lowell Haynes

**GUESTS:** Nick Parnell, Public Building Commissioner; Steve Armington, Architect, Done & Whittier; Robert Juusola, Turner Construction/OPM

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The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm, following the Committee's annual holiday dinner, and was chaired by Douglas Sweet, Acting Chair.

#### **The minutes of the 11/19/07 meeting were accepted**

#### **Nominations**

The Nominating Committee, consisting of Lucie and Barbara, reported that 5 members expressed interest in being co-chairs: Doug, Jini, Girard, Rosemary and Jana. They will make a brief presentation at the next meeting as to why they would like to be a co-chair and what skills they would bring.

Lucie made a motion to have the MCPD be run by co-chairs.

Discussion followed: Most people liked the idea. Bev mentioned that there can also be a vice chair to help spread the workload. Jason said when he was chair there was often too much to do and he agrees that it will be helpful to have more people. Members will vote for 1 of the candidates, and the two who get the most votes would be the co-chairs. We agreed to vote by secret ballot or email to Bev. Jason stated that years ago the Committee sought to mirror a Commission by having 9 members and alternate members. Bev asked if everyone received her memo about "Committee vs. Commission". She met with the Law Department to address these issues. We are free to move forward to be a Commission but we would be limited to the 9 members as described by law, one of whom would be a municipal official. We currently have 14 members. As a Committee, we do not have to have tiers of membership - everyone can be equal. Bev will draft a Mission and Organization Structure Statement, based on what other City Committees use.

**The motion to have co-chairs passed.**

#### **BUILDINGS DEPT. & Newton North High School**

The Committee requested an update about accessibility issues with the new Newton North High School. We welcomed Nick Parnell, Commissioner of Public Buildings, who came with Steve Armington (architect) and Robert Juusola (Turner Construction). They gave a **Power Point Presentation** about Newton North High School. Some of the major points of their presentation included:

- There will be 2 main entrances - a main entrance and a student entrance on Elm St., and there'll be a third entrance at the end near the fields.
- There will accessible parking spaces, 12 total: 5 at the main entrance, 3 at the theatre entrance and 2 at end of Lowell parking lot.
- There will be accessible paths around the stadium and accessible seating in the stadium. Lucie suggested this be staggered so that wheelchair users can sit with friends and family.

- Hull Street to the athletic entrance is a 40 foot outdoor stairway. AAB says they have to have a ramp so the Company is investigating the costs since they estimate a ramp would have to be the length of about 2 football fields. Jason said the Hull path will probably be used a lot. If road pitch on Hull is appropriate, allow HP spaces there. Jason also suggested they have good signage.
- Regarding traffic disbursement, Nick said they have created a number of different drop sites around the school. Event parking will be on both sides of Elm St. The School Dept determines most of the parking spaces. Most of the lots are for staff and faculty. The main ceremonial entrance will have the visitors' parking lot.
- Regarding handicapped parking spaces, Jason suggested HP spaces be closer to the stadium. Doug is concerned that with 1800 students there may be more needing HP spaces. Steve said they are supposed to provide 6 HP spaces but have planned on 12. Jason suggested they plan on 18. Lucie was concerned about the lack of covered drop off spaces for students who have to get out of a handicapped van, especially in foul weather. The architect will take that under advisement.
- There are 4 elevators. The swimming pool will have a lift. All science labs, kitchens bathrooms and tech-voc areas will have accessible sinks and all bathrooms will be fully accessible.
- Doug raised the issue of clearly raised Braille signage near and in the elevators. Robert said they're hiring a company to do signage and way finding.
- Steve described the theatre, which will have a lift to the orchestra pit. Accessible seating needs to be spread around. It will have audible equipment for the hearing impaired. Doors will have automatic openers. The little Theatre is a purchased product. They will have some accessible seating.
- Lucie brought up students with cognitive learning disabilities. Nick said they have had numerous meetings with many staff and department people to address a number of these issues.
- Nick will send MCPD floors plans. Lowell asked if they could show accessible routes.

The Committee thanked Nick, Steve and Robert for their time and the information they provided.

## **OTHER BUSINESS:**

### **Newton Housing Authority:**

The Newton Housing Authority made a request for a grant of \$3,300 to upgrade their two elevators at 82 Lincoln Street. The current door closing mechanism does not detect wheelchairs and wheelchair users get caught in the doors. The Housing Authority has funds for elevator maintenance and repair but doesn't have the budget to upgrade its elevators.

**MCPD passed a motion to grant \$3,300 to upgrade the 2 elevators at 82 Lincoln St.**

### **SNOW:**

Lowell had emailed out, and proceeded to hand out, a memo that we can give to businesses about shoveling sidewalks and curb cuts. There was discussion about snow plowing. Jason said we should add to the flyer that if the businesses use plow contractors they are still responsible to have it cleared. He suggested we think about a separate flyer for homeowners.

Following our APS and snow meeting with DPW on Nov 13, Lowell wrote a letter to Dave Turocy and sent an informational letter to Clint Schuckel. Bev had emailed her notes out to the Committee.

**MCPD passed a motion to ask the City to include the APS at Commonwealth and Washington Streets.**

## **CDBG ACCESS PROJECTS REPORT for December by Lowell**

This report was submitted to MCPD by email before this meeting for their review. Per usual it is copied here within the minutes. There was not time to discuss it. Lowell mentioned that curb cuts will resume in spring.

- Accessible Pedestrian Signals (Project CD0703C. Expended, \$25,015; Budget balance: \$19,813) – The Committee has requested the installation of APS-10 audible pedestrian signals at the intersections of Walnut and Cabot, Beacon and Chestnut, and Adams and Watertown. The total estimated hardware cost

for these three intersections is \$4,200—based on a cost of \$350 per pedestrian button. We have requested that the Department of Public Works pay the approximately \$1,200 for installation. Following a series of meetings, Acting Commissioner Dave Turocy agreed to find the money to pay for installation. Lowell will write Commissioner Turocy to confirm that the money will be found. Centre St. and Centre Ave. is a fourth priority intersection. Our hope is to initiate separate and independent crossing signals for the two streets, straighten the crosswalk across Centre St., and place the vehicle stop line before the crosswalk. The intersection would be best served by Polara Navigator signals because of ambient sound control and beaconing capabilities. Washington St. and Commonwealth Ave. is a fifth priority intersection. National Development and Newton-Wellesley Hospital have agreed to contribute \$90,000 toward improvements at that intersection. The Board of Aldermen voted to seek design recommendations from a consultant. Because the Purchasing Department is requiring that the consultant contract be bid, nothing will be determined until early in 2008. We are hoping that the project will include accessible pedestrian signals, preferably Polara Navigator signals.

- Wellington Park Access (Project CD0303C. Expended, \$5,411; Budget balance, \$0) – *No change since last report.* This project is a joint project using CDBG funds and Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds. The CDBG portion of the project is complete, except for the installation of benches. *[See the following project.]* It consists of an asphalt walkway providing an accessible route from the park entrance on Kilburn Street, past the basketball and tennis courts, then to the park entrance on Princess Road. *The CPA portion of the work was delayed because of a disagreement among residents regarding the location and surface material of additional walkways in the park. We have been told that the matter has been settled and all walkways will be constructed with asphalt surfaces to enhance accessibility.* (Expected Date of Completion: Spring 2008)
- Benches (Project CD0403C. Expended, \$0; Budget balance, \$3,000) – *No change since last report.* The current budget will be limited to installation of benches at Wellington Park when the construction of walkways in the park is completed. (Expected Date of Completion: Spring 2008)
- Curb Cuts (Project CD0803G. Expended, \$47,941; Budget Balance: \$134,887) – The Dept. of Public Works has finished its curb cut work until next spring. During the late summer and fall they completed 38 of the 62 curb cuts we had requested for installation. We’ve also recommended the removal of 10 poorly located and non-conforming curb cuts. Ironically, it was one week after construction ended when we finally received state approval to construct needed curb cuts at the intersection of Boylston St. and Hammond Pond Parkway. The approval process took a mere eight months. We are still expanding our list of curb cuts to be done in the 2008 construction season. Mayor’s Committee members are encouraged to report priority locations for needed curb cuts. (Expected Date of Completion: None. On-going work.)
- Public Facilities and Parks Access (Project CD0703A. Expended, \$27,975; Budget balance, \$40,075, of which \$28,882 has yet to be committed.) – *No change since last report.* The first project that was completed under this budget was the construction of two sets of stairs and railings in Burr Park. The second project under this budget is the construction of the accessible walkway from the Mason-Rice School parking lot to the planned accessible play area within the Newton Centre Playground. The project is being managed by the Dept. of Parks and Recreation and carried out by the Dept. of Public Works. *Work has been completed on the section of the walkway from the school parking lot to the brook.* The remaining portion of the walkway beyond the brook will be completed in 2008 following the installation of the new play area. There will be approximately \$28,882 remaining in this budget following the completion of the Newton Centre Playground walkway. *We can assign these remaining funds to a public facilities or parks project at any time.* There is a potential long-term request from the Dept. of Parks and Recreation for accessibility improvements at the Newton Highlands Playground and Upper Falls Playground. (EDC: none)

- FY08 Uncommitted Funds (Project CD0803A. Budget balance, \$61,470) – *This represents funds available for project(s) to be determined.* Because of the on-going need for accessible curb cuts, this budget is a logical source for applying to future curb cut construction, but other projects can be considered.

Lowell noted that he will work part time in 2008 following his retirement but that he will attend the January meeting of the MCPD.

**There was a motion to adjourn at 9:25pm.**

**The next meeting will be Wednesday, January 16 at 6:30pm in the cafeteria. Note the change of the meeting date due to the Jan. 21 MLK holiday.**